

# the call

**By: featherx**

i'll come back when you call me,

no need to say goodbye.

Status: ongoing

Published: 2015-02-11

Words: 2086

Original source: <https://archiveofourown.org/works/3332585>

Exported with the assistance of [FicHub.net](https://FicHub.net)

# the call

[Introduction](#)

[Chapter 1](#)

# Chapter 1

"Mama, mama--"

The door bursts open. A flash of blue comes tumbling in, a smile plastered on their little face. A tall woman turns around, her headdress covering most of her face. "Ichirin?"

"Mama, I made a new friend today," Ichirin says, eyes wide in excitement as they look up at the woman.

"Really? And who is he, then?"

Much to the woman's surprise, Ichirin frowns - and Ichirin doesn't frown very much. "They're not a boy, mama."

"They'? How many friends did you make?"

"Just one, mama! But they're not a boy or a girl! They're a *captain*, y'see?"

Ichirin's mother frowns, but shakes her head. "Please don't talk to that person again, son. You can only be one gender, not both or none."

And that's when Ichirin hunches down, their eyes flickering to their feet. "I'm a girl, mama, I'm sure of it already--"

"You are a *boy*, my *son*," the woman enunciates as clearly as she can, bending down to face Ichirin on eye level, "and there is no changing that. You are a boy, you understand?"

Ichirin's breath hitches, and their shoulders shake, and their hands curl up into fists. But they nod and say "yes, I understand", and oh, how it hurts for them. Their mother nods and straightens, before heading back into her room.

Ichirin stands for a little while longer, trembling, shivering, before scrambling to hide in their own bedroom. They stare at themselves in the mirror, furiously wiping away their tear tracks and rubbing at their puffy red eyes, and says, "I am not... not..."

They take a deep breath.

"I am not a g-g-girl ."

Their chest burns.

---

The next morning, as soon as their mother takes her eyes off of them, Ichirin slips away and rushes towards the nearby beach. The rocks there are sharp, jagged, and the waves are always just narrowly missing crashing against them, but it's always been a soothing place for them, even more so once they discover their new friend.

Ichirin almost slips several times on the sand, somehow, but they eventually make it to the area they're sure they had gone the other day to see their new friend. It takes them a while and a lot of patience, but the waves roll up after some time to reveal a child, similar to them in appearance, sitting on a piece of driftwood and carrying around an anchor that's twice (or thrice) their size and somehow not even sinking.

Ichirin doesn't question it, though - the captain is their friend and that's all that matters, right? "Captain Murasa! Hello."

Murasa nods. They're a silent one, they notice. "Ichirin."

"I was wondering," Ichirin begins, dipping their feet in the water and kicking at the water halfheartedly. "My mama says I'm a boy, and everyone *e/se* says I'm a b-boy, too, but. Umm. What do you think? I don't feel like a boy. I wanna say I'm a girl, but mama doesn't allow it."

The child captain pauses. They lie down on their stomach on the driftwood, swirling around at the water with their finger slowly. "I don't know. You can be whatever you want, right? You can be a girl if you want to. Or you can be a boy if you want to, too, but you don't look like you do. So. Be a girl, or something."

Smiling lightly, though already wiping a little at their eyes, Ichirin nods. "Okay. Thank you, Captain Murasa!"

"Bright."

"Ah, sorry." A pause. "My mama said I shouldn't talk to you anymore 'cause we should only have one gender, not both or none."

As they expected, Murasa rears up almost immediately, almost like raising their shackles. The finger swirling in the water rapidly speeds up, creating a miniature whirlpool around them almost immediately. The menacing roar of the waves, though faint, echoes in the quiet beach. What's most frightening is the glare in Murasa's face - a deadly gaze, emanating a vicious aura and threatening to put the anchor with them to good use.

"I am a *captain*," Murasa says with a tone of finality. "I'm not a boy or a girl or an anything. I'm a captain and that's it."

"I think so too," Ichirin agrees, feeling something tug at their chest. It's envy, they realize; envy towards the child captain for having so much confidence in their self-identity. "I wish I could... be as cool as you," they whisper, clutching at their heart. "Whenever my mama says I'm a boy, it hurts a lot here. Why..."

The whirlpool dies down, and the roar of the waves fade away. Ichirin curls up into a fetal position, sniffing as they try to last as long as they can without spilling their tears, before a cold, damp hand settles on their shoulder. They look up, blinking back unshed tears, into the sea-green eyes of Murasa as the child captain squeezes Ichirin's shoulder reassuringly. Though Murasa looks a tad uncomfortable, Ichirin just about welcomes the freezing cold touch,

grasping at the child captain's arm and clinging onto them as if they were their lifeline.

Murasa flinches. "I'm sorry," they offer hesitantly. "Now you're all dark. Won't you smile? The brightness is better than this, right?"

Ichirin forces out a weak laugh. They don't really get what Murasa's talking about, but the way they say it is really cute. "Sorry. And thanks," they say, before managing a strained smile. "Is this better, Captain Murasa?"

"No, no. Look, it's always brighter if you do it nicely, like this." They reach out from their spot on the water, lifting Ichirin's face up to make a deformed smile. It sends Ichirin into giggles, and that's Murasa's time to smile. "See? Now it's... ow. Now it's bright."

"Thank you, Captain Murasa," Ichirin says, flashing one of their larger smiles. Murasa ducks down, face tinted red, the water swirling around her and splashing Ichirin lightly.

---

They would have talked for longer, but Murasa insists they leave once the first few other visitors start trickling in, and Ichirin has to go leave and return to the house before their mother finds out they're missing. They flash Murasa one last smile and laugh at the child captain as they wince at the supposed 'brightness', before they're swallowed up by a small wave. Ichirin leaves as soon as only the driftwood, halved in two, remains in the same spot as Murasa had been seconds before.

It's a relaxing routine - every morning, Ichirin would visit, and talk to Murasa, who'd always show up with a swirl of the waves. It intrigued Ichirin how the child captain could do that, but they'd never ask, too frightened at the prospect of angering them. In any case, it doesn't scare them too much, and it doesn't seem to be harmful, so Ichirin lets it go. It won't hurt them in any way, right?

One day, it does.

An early Sunday morning. Ichirin fixes themselves up, heads out to visit Murasa once again, but is greeted by an unlikely sight.

Instead of the empty sea as always, Murasa is already there, but dressed differently and on the sand instead of floating on the water. They're in a light blue dress, with a hazy and distorted figure standing beside them, like a tall, gangly man. The man firmly holds Murasa's hand, who looks up at him confusedly. The man starts saying a few words, voice too soft for Ichirin to hear from the other side of the beach, and Murasa looks disconcerted. A few more words are exchanged, and then;

*"I am not a girl! "*

The water in the beach swirls about rapidly, beating against the shore and washing up inches away from Ichirin's bare feet.

The man starts shouting, too, but quieter than Murasa, and so Ichirin creeps closer, curiosity getting the better of them. Then suddenly, the scene changes, seemingly warping and twisting in on itself, before normalizing to just Murasa, this time in their regular outfit, walking straight off the deck of a ship and falling into the murky depths of the ocean below. Ichirin screams, then remembers that Murasa doesn't get hurt by the water, and that they'll just rise back up and then they can talk again. Right?

The same man from before, accompanied by a few more sailors, race onto the deck and start yelling at the water. Murasa doesn't come back up, and the bubbles fade away.

Ichirin shrieks and falls to their knees, shivering and holding back tears of fright. What had just happened? Had Murasa just... drowned? Had they just drowned? No, that couldn't be it. Murasa *lives* in the water, so there could be no way they could just drown like that. Right? *Right?*

"Minamitsu!" Ichirin cries, scrambling to get over to the scene. It disappears into thin air, only a lazy white mist floating where it had been, but Ichirin could care less. They crawl over to where they meet each other every morning, and Ichirin screams out *Minamitsu* over and over, eyes alternating between alarmingly wide and shut tight.

Murasa doesn't come until Ichirin's voice has disappeared and their throat has gone hoarse. Only when they're crumpled on the ground, shaking in their curled-up form, does Murasa peek out from underwater, their eyes just barely visible from below.

"Ichirin?"

Jolting upwards, Ichirin immediately jumps into the water and hugs Murasa with all the strength they can muster. They don't care when Murasa flinches away, or when their skin is dead-cold, or when the water starts lapping at their waist. The fact that Murasa is *here*, that Murasa is *alive*, is the only thing that matters.

Murasa doesn't react at first, but does start stroking Ichirin's hair, murmuring softly. Ichirin snuffles, trying to hold back the rest of their tears, before stepping back slightly back onto the shore. They're still holding on to the child captain loosely, and find that they don't care. If anything, their cold touch is comforting. It helps prove that Murasa is still *here* and not... gone.

"... So you saw that?" Murasa whispers, and Ichirin whimpers. They nod. A sigh escapes Murasa's lips. "Oh. Guess you know I'm kinda... dead."

Dead.

The word rings in the quiet beach, the only sound being the calling of seagulls and the water washing up on the shore. Ichirin stands, stock-still, before they start trembling and looking up at Murasa with eyes the size of dinner plates.



"N... No," they say. "That... That can't be, right? You're right here, a- and I'm holding you..." Their arms drop to their sides, shivering like the rest of their body. "Y-You're..."

"I'm a ship phantom," Murasa says, picking at the edge of the driftwood they sit on. "I sink ships. Any ship that passes by. They never have a ladle." They look up at Ichirin's tearstained face, who still stays, frightened eyes trained on the child captain. Murasa lets out a tired breath, feeling their energy drain away. "'M sorry. Never told you. Do you... hate me?"

Ichirin takes a moment to recover, their breath still coming out erratically. The truth *hurts*. What they had seen... had happened, at some point at Murasa's life? The same Murasa who talked to them and laughed with them and made them smile? The same Murasa who insists they're not a boy or a girl or anything but a *captain*?

Murasa's words from the scene echo in their mind. *I am not a girl.*

And that's when they *know*.

"I'm sorry," Ichirin wails. "I'm sorry I never knew. Minamitsu."

They throw themselves at Murasa once again and cling to their freezing body, inhaling the fresh scent of saltwater. Ichirin cries and though they don't know why, they just *know*, Murasa doesn't deserve being dead, doesn't deserve being a murderer, doesn't deserve carrying their anchor everywhere to remind them of their existence. Doesn't deserve the ocean.

"It's okay," Murasa murmurs, and Ichirin only tightens their grip.

---

"Where have you been, young man?" Ichirin's mother snaps.

*Oh no*, Ichirin thinks, right before the sharp crack of a whip flashes in their ears. Ichirin whimpers, holds their breath, and crouches into a small position as the black leather weapon crashes onto their back.

---

It is years later when Ichirin sees Murasa again. The monk remembers the scent of salt and the icy touch. The captain remembers the brightness, and the smile.

It is when they are in a dark, dank storage room, and with Murasa's question hanging in the air;

"Do you have a ladle?"